

THE BIRDS OF JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

THOMAS H. DAVIS

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge (JBWR) was established in 1953 by the City of New York. In 1973 the land passed into the hands of the National Park Service as part of Gateway National Recreation Area. To date, 312 species of birds have been recorded at the refuge.

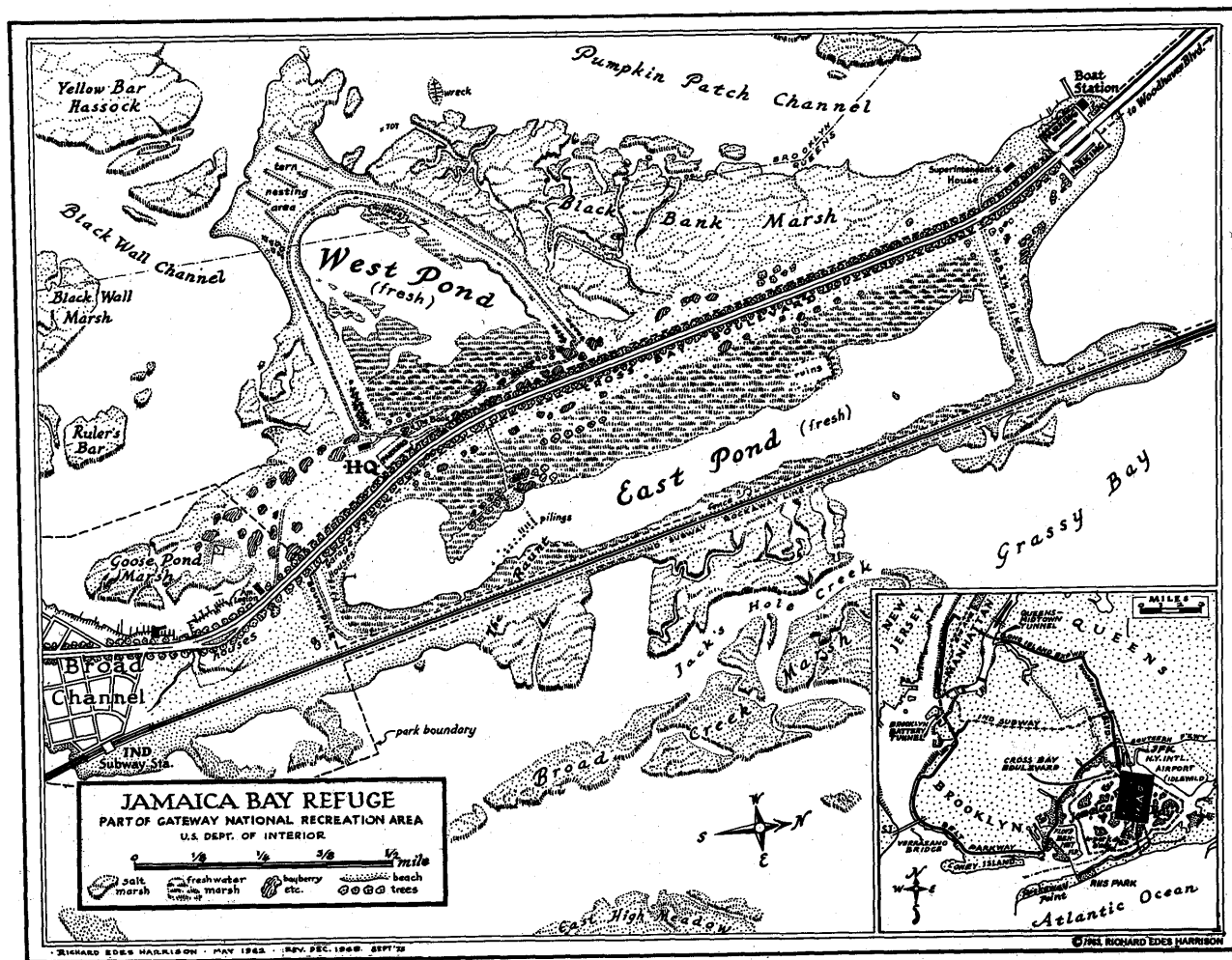
This compilation of the birds of JBWR is meant for visiting birders who want to know what species they may expect to see. The task of assembling this list was made difficult by the lack of any file of past sightings. Also, a list published by New York City's Cultural Council Foundation contained many unsubstantiated sightings and escapes. Escaped cage birds appear at JBWR frequently, due to the proximity of the refuge to New York City and J.F.K. International Airport. Some escapes are obvious, such as Bar-headed and Egyptian Geese, Spur-winged Plover, parrots, and other "exotics." Others are less easily categorized, such as White-cheeked (Bahama) Pintail, Common Ground Dove, and Black-billed Magpie, all of which might have occurred at the refuge under natural circumstances but are excluded from this list.

SEASONAL HEADINGS

- Sp— Spring: principally April and May, but in a broader sense, the spring migration.
- Su— Summer: June and July, the breeding season.
- eF— early Fall: August and September. Early fall migrants include shorebirds, flycatchers, vireos, and warblers.
- IF— late Fall: October and November. Late fall migrants include waterfowl, hawks, and finches.
- W— Winter: December to March.

STATUS SYMBOLS

- A— abundant: more than 50 individuals are usually recorded on every visit at this season.
- C— common: 10 to 50 individuals usually recorded every visit.
- U— uncommon: 1 to 9 individuals per visit, often missed.
- R— rare: only a few individuals recorded throughout the season, sometimes missed.



BREEDING SPECIES

Species known to have nested at JBWR are preceded by an asterisk. Species not known to have bred since 1970 have the asterisk enclosed in parentheses. Other species have disappeared or will disappear as ecological changes take place. This is especially true at the West Pond, which has become more saline in recent years. Pied-billed Grebes, Least Bitterns, Pintails, American Wigeons, American Coots, and other freshwater marsh nesting birds probably no longer breed. Also, a tern colony situated west of the West Pond was abandoned in the late 1960's, despite protection. This colony was composed of several hundred pairs of Common Terns, and about 50 pairs of Black Skimmers, with a few pairs of Least Terns and Piping Plovers at its periphery. Presently, all the herons, American Oystercatchers, Piping Plovers, Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls, and Common Terns nest on remote islands scattered about Jamaica Bay. The Black Skimmer no longer breeds in the vicinity of Jamaica Bay.

The terminology employed in this list is purposely somewhat vague and therefore flexible. The status symbols employed reflect each species' status at JBWR, not throughout the New York City region. Many species which might even be considered abundant in nearby areas are listed as uncommon or rare at JBWR because the species' favored habitat does not exist here. For example, all three species of scoters are abundant in migration off the Rockaway beaches but are rarely seen at JBWR. Tufted Titmice are common residents of nearby Forest Park but this species has not yet been recorded at JBWR. When there was doubt about how to define a species' status at JBWR I have opted for the more conservative definition. It is better to be surprised at finding more than expected rather than less. If interested readers desire to consult detailed references to the birds of the New York City region they are urged to see John Bull's *Birds of the New York Area* (Harper and Row, New York, 1964), Supplement to *Birds of the New York Area* (*Proc. of the Linnaean Society of New York* 71: 1-54, 1970), and *Birds of New York State* (Doubleday/Natural History Press, Garden City, NY, 1974).

	Sp	Su	eF	IF	W
Loon, Common	U			U	R
Red-throated	R			R	R
Grebe, Red-necked					R
Horned	C			C	C
Eared	R		R	R	
* Pied-billed	U	U	U	U	R
Cormorant, Great				R	R
Double-crested	A	R	C	U	
Great Blue Heron	U	R	U	C	U
* Egret, Great	C	C	C	U	R
* Snowy	C	C	A	C	U
* Cattle	U	U	U	R	
* Heron, Louisiana	U	U	U	R	
* Little Blue	U	U	U	R	
* Green	C	C	C	U	R
* Black-crowned Night	A	A	A	A	C
* Yellow-crowned Night	U	U	U		
(*) Bittern, American	U	R	R	U	U
* Least	U	U	U		
* Glossy Ibis	A	A	A	C	R
Swan, Mute		R	R		
Whistling				R	
* Canada Goose	C	U	U	A	U
Brant	A	U	U	A	A
Snow Goose	C	R	R	C	U
* Mallard	A	A	A	A	A
* Black Duck	A	A	A	A	A
* Gadwall	C	C	C	C	U
* Pintail	U	R	U	A	C
* Teal, Green-winged	C	U	C	C	U
* Blue-winged	C	U	C	U	R
Wigeon, European	R		R	R	R
* American	A	R	C	A	A
* Northern Shoveler	U	R	U	C	U
Wood Duck	U	R	U	U	
* Redhead	U	U	U	U	
Ring-necked Duck	U	R	R	U	
Canvasback	C	R	R	A	A

	Sp	Su	eF	IF	W
Scaup, Greater	A	U	U	A	A
Lesser	U			U	U
Common Goldeneye	R			U	C
Bufflehead	A	R	R	A	A
Oldsquaw				U	U
Eider, Common	R	R		R	R
King	R	R			R
Scoter, White-winged				R	R
Surf				R	R
Black				R	R
* Ruddy Duck	A	C	C	A	A
Merganser, Hooded	U	R	R	U	R
Common				U	U
Red-breasted	C	U	U	C	A
Turkey Vulture	R				
Goshawk				R	R
Hawk, Sharp-shinned	R			U	
Cooper's	R			R	
Red-tailed	R			R	R
Red-shouldered	R			R	
Broad-winged	R		R		
Rough-legged				R	U
Bald Eagle			R		R
* Marsh Hawk	U	R	U	U	U
Osprey	U		U	U	
Gyr Falcon					R
Peregrine Falcon	R		R	R	R
Merlin	R		R	U	R
* American Kestrel	U	R	U	C	U
* Bobwhite	C	C	C	C	C
* Ring-necked Pheasant	R	R	R	R	R
Rail, King	R			R	R
* Clapper	C	C	C	U	U
Virginia	U		U	U	R
Sora	U	R	U	R	
Rail, Yellow	R			R	
Black	R		R		
* Common Gallinule	U	U	U	R	R

	Sp	Su	eF	IF	W
* American Coot	U	U	U	C	C
* American Oystercatcher	U	U	R		
Plover, Semipalmated	A	R	A	U	
* Piping	R	R	R		
* Killdeer	C	C	C	C	U
Plover, American Golden	R		U	U	
Black-bellied	A	U	A	A	C
Ruddy Turnstone	C	R	C	U	
* American Woodcock	U	U	U	U	R
Common Snipe	U			U	R
Whimbrel	R	R	U		
Sandpiper, Upland	R		R		
* Spotted	C	U	C	U	
Solitary	U		R		
* Willet	U	R	U	R	
Yellowlegs, Greater	A	C	A	A	U
Lesser	C	R	C	U	
Red Knot	A	R	U	R	
Sandpiper, Pectoral	U		C	R	
White-rumped	U		U	U	
Baird's			R		
Least	A	U	A	U	
Curlew	R		R		
Dunlin	C		U	A	A
Dowitcher, Short-billed	A	U	A	U	
Long-billed	R		R	C	R
Sandpiper, Stilt	R		C	U	
Semipalmated	A	U	A	C	R
Western	R		U	U	R
Buff-breasted			R		
Godwit, Marbled	R		R	R	R
Hudsonian			R	R	
Ruff	R		R	R	
Sanderling	C	U	C	C	U
American Avocet			R	R	
Phalarope, Wilson's	R	R	U	R	
Red	R				
Northern	R		R	R	

	Sp	Su	eF	IF	W
Gull, Glaucous	R			R	R
Iceland	R			R	R
* Great Black-backed	C	C	C	A	A
Lesser Black-backed				R	R
* Herring	A	A	A	A	A
Ring-billed	A	U	C	A	A
Black-headed	R		R	R	R
Laughing	C	U	C	U	
Bonaparte's	U	R	R	U	U
Little	R	R	R	R	R
Tern, Gull-billed	R	R	R		
Forster's		R	U	R	
* Common	A	A	A	R	
Roseate	R		R		
(*) Least	C	C	C		
Royal		R	R		
Caspian	R	R	R		
Black	R		R		
(*) Black Skimmer	C	C	C		
* Dove, Rock	C	C	C	C	C
* Mourning	C	C	C	C	C
Cuckoo, Yellow-billed	R		R		
(*) Black-billed	R	R	R		
Owl, Barn	R	R	R	R	R
Snowy				R	R
Long-eared				R	R
* Short-eared	R	R	R	U	U
Saw-whet				R	R
Whip-poor-will	R		R		
Common Nighthawk	R		U		
Chimney Swift	U	R	U		
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	R		R		
Belted Kingfisher	U		U	U	R
* Common Flicker	C	R	C	C	U
Woodpecker, Red-bellied	R				
Red-headed	R		R	R	
Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied	U		U	U	
Woodpecker, Hairy	R		R	R	R
Downy	U	R	U	U	U

	Sp	Su	eF	IF	W
* Kingbird, Eastern	U	R	U		
Western			R	R	
Great Crested Flycatcher	R		R		
Eastern Phoebe	U		U	C	
Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied	R		U		
Acadian	R				
Willow	R		R		
Alder	R		U		
Least	U		U		
Eastern Wood Pewee	U		U		
Olive-sided Flycatcher	R		R		
* Horned Lark	U	R	U	C	C
* Swallow, Tree	A	C	A	A	R
Bank	U		U		
Rough-winged	R		R		
Barn	A	U	A	U	
Cliff	R		R		
Purple Martin	R		R		
Blue Jay	U		U	C	
Crow, Common	R	R	R	R	R
Fish	U	R	R	R	R
Black-capped Chickadee	R		R	U	R
Nuthatch, White-breasted	R		R	U	
Red-breasted	U		U	U	U
Brown Creeper	U		U	C	
Wren, House	U		U	R	
Winter	R			U	
Carolina	R		R	R	
* Long-billed Marsh	C	C	C	U	U
Short-billed Marsh	R		R	R	
* Mockingbird	U	U	U	U	U
* Gray Catbird	C	C	C	C	R
* Brown Thrasher	C	U	C	C	R
* American Robin	C	U	C	C	U
Thrush, Wood	U		U		
Hermit	U			C	R
Swainson's	U		U		
Gray-cheeked	U		U		

	Sp	Su	eF	IF	W
Veery	U		U		
Eastern Bluebird	R			R	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	U		R		
Kinglet, Golden-crowned	C			C	
Ruby-crowned	C		U	C	
Water Pipit	R			U	R
* Cedar Waxwing	U	R	C	U	R
Shrike, Northern				R	R
Loggerhead	R		R	R	R
Starling	A	A	A	A	A
Vireo, White-eyed	R		R		
Yellow-throated	R		R		
Solitary	U			U	
Red-eyed	U		C	U	
Philadelphia	R		U		
Warbling	R		R		
Warbler, Black-and-white	U		U	R	
Prothonotary	R				
Worm-eating	R				
Golden-winged	R				
Blue-winged	U		R		
Tennessee	R		U		
Orange-crowned				R	
Nashville	U		U		
Parula	C		U		
* Yellow	C	C	C		
Magnolia	U		U		
Cape May	U		C		
Black-throated Blue	U		U		
Yellow-rumped	C		U	A	C
Black-throated Green	U		U		
Cerulean	U		U		
Blackburnian	U		U		
Yellow-throated	R				
Chestnut-sided	U		U		
Bay-breasted	U		U		
Blackpoll	C		U		
Pine	R		R		

	Sp	Su	eF	IF	W
Warbler, Prairie	U		U		
Palm	U		U	C	R
Ovenbird	U		U		
Waterthrush, Northern	U		U		
Louisiana	R				
Warbler, Kentucky	R				
Connecticut			R		
Mourning	R		R		
* Common Yellowthroat	C	C	C	U	R
Yellow-breasted Chat	R		R		
Warbler, Hooded	R		R		
Wilson's	U		U		
Canada	U		U		
American Redstart	U		C	U	
* House Sparrow	C	C	C	C	C
Bobolink	U		C	R	
Eastern Meadowlark	U			U	U
Blackbird, Yellow-headed			R	R	
* Red-winged	A	A	A	A	C
Oriole, Orchard	R		R		
Northern	U		U	U	
Rusty Blackbird	U			U	R
* Common Grackle	C	C	C	C	R
* Brown-headed Cowbird	C	U	C	C	C
Tanager, Western	R			R	
Scarlet	U		U		
Summer	R				
* Cardinal	U	U	U	U	U
Grosbeak, Rose-breasted	U		U		
Blue	R		R		
Indigo Bunting	U		U	U	
Dickcissel	R		U	U	
Evening Grosbeak	R			R	R
Finch, Purple	U			U	R
* House	C	C	C	C	C
Pine Grosbeak				R	R
Common Redpoll				R	R
Pine Siskin	R			U	U

	Sp	Su	eF	IF	W
* American Goldfinch	U	R	U	C	U
Crossbill, Red				R	R
White-winged				R	R
* Rufous-sided Towhee	C	C	C	C	U
* Sparrow, Savannah	C	R	R	C	C
Grasshopper				R	R
Henslow's	R			R	
* Sharp-tailed	U	U	U	C	U
* Seaside	C	C	C	C	U
Vesper	R			U	
Lark			R		
Dark-eyed Junco	C			C	C
Sparrow, Tree				U	C
Chipping	U		U	C	R
Clay-colored			R		
Field	U		U	U	U
White-crowned	U			U	R
White-throated	C			A	C
Fox	R			U	U
Lincoln's	U		R	U	
Swamp	U			C	U
* Song	C	C	C	C	C
Lapland Longspur				R	U
Snow Bunting				R	U

ACCIDENTALS

The following species have been recorded only once or twice:

Sooty Shearwater (*fide* H. Johnson)
 White Pelican (Sep 26-Nov 13, 1964)
 Wood Stork (Jun 10, 1961)
 White Ibis (Oct 25, 1969)
 Black Brant (Oct 14-Nov 29, 1974)
 Fulvous Tree Duck (May 29-Jun 4, 1965)
 Cinnamon Teal (May 20-Jul 18, 1964)
 Swallow-tailed Kite (Sep 2, 1956)
 Golden Eagle (Oct 31, 1975)
 Purple Gallinule (May 14-16, 1958)
 Wilson's Plover (information lacking)
 Purple Sandpiper (*fide* E. Daly)

Black-necked Stilt (Jun 18, 1972, and Apr 20-25, 1973)
Parasitic Jaeger (information lacking)
Pomarine Jaeger (Jun 17, 1975)
Great Horned Owl (*fide* H. Johnson)
Sage Thrasher (Jan 13-17, 1973)
Redwing (Feb 20-24, 1959)
Townsend's Warbler (May 9, 1970)
Boat-tailed Grackle (May 19, 1972)
Lark Bunting (Jun 6, 1959)

9446 85 Road, Woodhaven, New York 11421

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Davis is undoubtedly one of the most active and energetic birdwatchers in the New York area, or for that matter, any other area. There is no phase of birding that does not claim his interest, from listing to photographing to banding, etc. He has a special interest in neotropical birds and has led several field trips to points in South America, as well as visiting islands in the Caribbean, and points in Mexico and Central America. He is a past president of the Linnaean Society of New York, one of the instigators of the New York Rare Bird Alert, and its present voice and editor. He has been a frequent contributor to *The Kingbird*. He formerly co-edited the Hudson-St. Lawrence Region for *American Birds*, and is the current editor of *The Linnaean News-Letter*. In his spare time he works for the New York Telephone Company.